



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director

### MEMORANDUM

July 11, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director  
Office of Management and Budget

cc: Gabe Albornoz, President  
County Council

From: Tiffany Ward, Director  
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

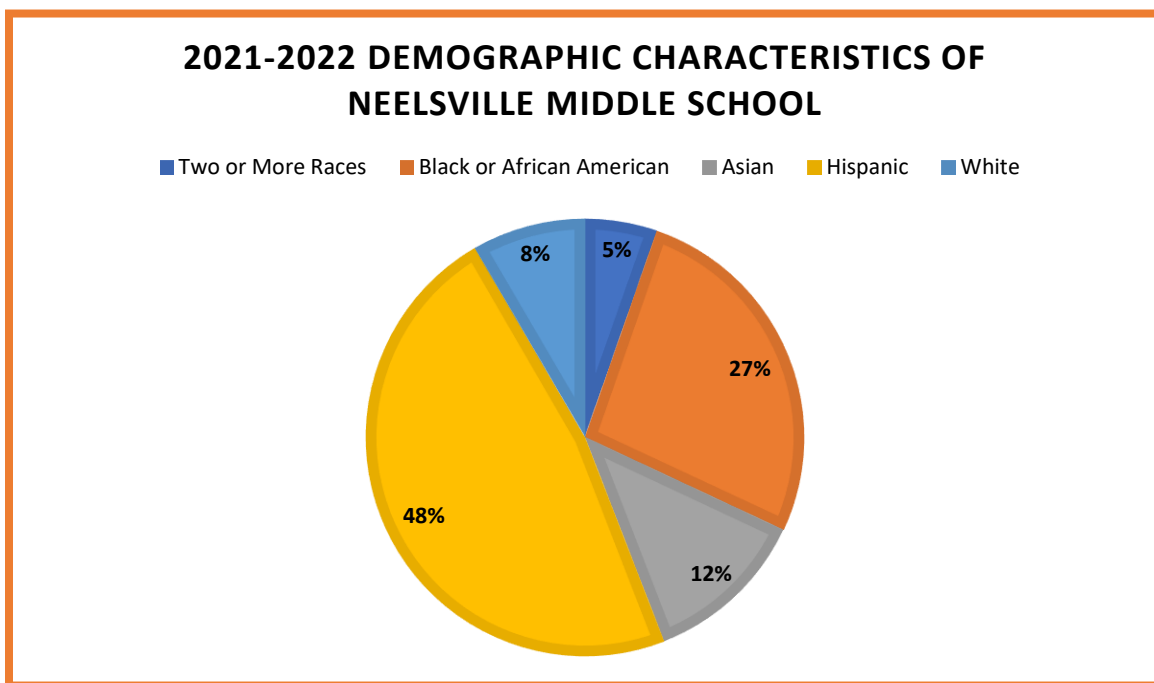
Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-05  
FY23 Capital Budget of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Major Capital  
Projects – Secondary (P652102)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-05 FY23 Capital Budget of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Major Capital Projects – Secondary (P652102) could advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County as the requested funds are needed to adjust for inflationary costs associated with construction of a new Neelsville Middle School which primarily serves students of color.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-05 FY23 Capital Budget of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Major Capital Projects is to fund cost increases in the Neelsville Middle School Major Capital Sub-Project as the project has experienced validated extraordinary inflation in construction costs.

Informed by a 2018 countywide assessment of school facilities that examined capital projects, systemic replacements, and other facility infrastructure challenges, it was determined that Neelsville Middle School (among others) was in need of various building systems and programmatic updates. An FY2021 appropriation was approved for planning funds to begin the architectural design of the project while an FY2022 appropriation was

approved to begin the construction of the project (which is scheduled to be completed in August 2024).<sup>1</sup>

Located in Germantown, Neelsville Middle school primarily serves children of color in grades 6 through 8. During the 2021-2022 school year, it was reported that 61.1% of Neelsville Middle School students were eligible to participate in the Free and Reduced-priced Meals Program (FARMS) – primarily serving children identified as low-income, homeless, migrant, runaway, or foster children<sup>2</sup> – while 22.2% participated in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program.<sup>3</sup>



**Source:** \*FY 2023 Educational Facilities Master Plan and the FY 2023–2028 Capital Improvements Program: Seneca Valley Cluster

Research continues to highlight links between access to wealth and academic achievement. Due to historical and systemic factors that intentionally built wealth for white families while denying Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) families the same opportunities,

<sup>1</sup> The Department of Materials Management. *FY 2023 educational facilities master plan and the FY 2023–2028 capital improvements program*. 2022. Available at:

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning/cipmaster.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. *The national school lunch program: fact sheet*. 2017. Available at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp>

<sup>3</sup> The Department of Materials Management. *FY 2023 educational facilities master plan and the FY 2023–2028 capital improvements program*. 2022. Available at:

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning/cipmaster.aspx>

achievement gaps in education persist and are exacerbated as Black assets – which fund their local public schools – continue to be undervalued<sup>4</sup>. As a result, BIPOC children are more likely to attend under resourced schools, making it difficult to meet the needs of both the students and teachers alike.

III. **ANALYSIS:** Neelsville Middle School primarily serves children that most often face the greatest systemic barriers to success. ORESJ therefore supports funding increases to continue construction of the new building. The research is clear, demonstrating that beyond aesthetics, facility conditions impact a student's educational environment and achievement as well as teacher performance and satisfaction and the social and community environment.<sup>5</sup> Most notably, a 2018 study from the California Policy Lab at UCLA and UC Berkley found that when it comes to school spending, productivity, and student outcomes, school facilities matter with investments in new facility construction even having a positive effect on student's test scores.<sup>6</sup> Overall, they discovered that when school facilities are improved:<sup>7</sup>

- Student test scores gradually and modestly improved;
- School attendance immediately and significantly improved; and
- Student effort significantly improved.

Upon completion of Neelsville Middle School, ORESJ would ask that MCPS consider the following points to ensure that students continue to be equitably served in their new building:

- Upon reopening, make efforts to recruit and retain a highly qualified workforce that is reflective of the student population;
- Regularly examine the facility's accessibility to safely accommodate students with disabilities;
- Ensure that regular maintenance and upkeep efforts are addressed to prevent the new facility from falling into disrepair;
- As we continue to grapple with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, their caregivers, and their educators, be sure to keep up with the most up-to-date recommendations from county health officials regarding proper air filtration, sanitation, and capacity limits.

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<sup>4</sup> Perry, A., Rothwell, J., & et. al. *The devaluation of assets in Black neighborhoods: The case of residential property*. 2018. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/devaluation-of-assets-in-black-neighborhoods/>

<sup>5</sup> Jacksonville Public Education Fund. *Student achievement and school facilities*. 2020. Available at: <https://www.jaxpef.org/what-we-do/research/student-achievement-and-school-facilities>

<sup>6</sup> Lafortune, J. & Schönholzer, D. *Do school facilities matter? Measuring the effects of capital expenditures on student and neighborhood outcomes*. 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Learning Liftoff. *A better school building may mean better test scores [study results]*. 2019. Available at: <https://www.learningliftoff.com/better-school-building-better-test-scores/>

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Capital Budget of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Major Capital Projects –  
Secondary (P652102)  
July 11, 2022  
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cc: Monifa McKnight, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools  
Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnership, Office of the County Executive